

## Deacon Steve Petrill



It was a hospital visit with a man on his deathbed that led Deacon Steve Petrill to consider the diaconate in a deeper way.

Deacon Petrill, who served as a lector, Eucharistic minister and homebound minister at his parish, St. Brigid of Kildare in Dublin, visited with the man a couple of times.

“The first time I visited him, he seemed to be doing well. We had a nice visit and all was looking up,” said Deacon Petrill. “However, the second time I visited him, he had experienced some kind of traumatic medical event that morning and was at the end of his life, surrounded by his wife and children. It made me realize how ministry sometimes calls us into the very center of the most personal parts of other people's lives. It turned out that the gentleman who passed away was a deacon in another diocese, and although we never talked about the diaconate in our first visit, I felt a nudge from the Holy Spirit by that very fact. My experiences with him really helped me grow in my desire to serve Christ and His church in a deeper way.”

Deacon Petrill is a Professor of Psychology and Associate Dean for Research at Ohio State. He earned his B.S. in psychology from the University of Notre Dame, followed by an M.A. and Ph.D. from Case Western Reserve University.

In his studies and work he looks at links between biology, psychology, the environment and sociology/culture.

“The Church has reinforced the spiritual aspects as well; in particular how spirituality fits into the relations between the biological, psychological, social, and cultural aspects of who we are,” he said. “Many of our joys and struggles are how we relate these things to one another and it has helped me see the Incarnation of Jesus in a fuller way.”

Deacon Petrill and his wife, Dawn, have been married for 21 years and they have three children: Nate, 16; Anthony, 13; and Emily, 10.

He says that for as much as he has learned through his studies, he has also learned from his parish ministry.

“Any given day is someone's best day and someone else's worst day, for all kinds of different reasons with all points in between,” Deacon Petrill said. “One has to be very flexible and attentive in order to truly serve the needs of others, in those multiple moments that are occurring simultaneously.”

Choosing the diaconate was something that evolved out of a difficult period in his own life about 10 years ago, a time when many people close to him were very sick and others passed away. Considering the many people who reached out to him and his family had an impact on Deacon Petrill.

“I had to surrender to God and learn to trust Him more deeply,” he said. “By the grace of God, these experiences gelled the contemplations of my earlier adult life and led me to actively move down the path I’m currently on.”